

# Common Cents Public Participation Findings

## March 4, 2011



Reported by the Citizens League, with TakeAction Minnesota



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In Partnership with the Bush Foundation

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## Executive Summary

The Citizens League and TakeAction Minnesota, in partnership with the Bush Foundation, hosted community conversations around the state and online to share information about Minnesota's budgetary challenges and to ask citizens: *what values and priorities should guide solutions to state budget challenges for the long-term?*

Thirty-eight workshops were held—23 in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area and 15 in Greater Minnesota; 605 people attended the community workshops. An additional 136 participated formally online (via online surveys or discussion forums). While Liberals were slightly oversampled, the remainder of the demographics were fairly diverse—approximately 50/50 on gender; a good cross-section of ages; and 66% White or Caucasian (non-Hispanic), 12% African American, 7% Asian and 10% other ethnicities.

### Key Themes (Page 7)

- (1) There was a consistent emphasis on reforming services, especially K-12 education; health and income support for the poor, disabled and elderly; long-term care for the elderly; and higher education.
- (2) Participants see Minnesota as a high quality, well-educated state, generally willing to continue to spend to maintain that, but want to focus on reform and a more competent, innovative government to accomplish that reform in partnership with others.
- (3) Participants believe the tax structure needs reforming, to become more fair and transparent.
- (4) Participants are willing to make across the board spending cuts in the short-term, but don't favor spending cuts (alone) as a long-term strategy.
- (5) Participants want better information about the state budget and favor an inclusive approach.

## **Introduction**

The state of Minnesota has entered what many are refer to as the “new normal.” Changing demographic and financial trends pose significant challenges to the way the state does business. With a large current budget shortfall and projections showing ongoing shortfalls, Minnesota cannot continue to do business as usual.

Solutions to large budget deficits are typically associated with words like “pain,” “sacrifice” and “tough choices.” The decisions are often very difficult. The basis of these decisions, however, is not an accounting exercise, but an expression of values and priorities about what type of state its citizens want Minnesota to be. Do we want much less government? Are we willing to pay higher taxes because we think the current array of services should be preserved? How should we decide who pays? Do we imagine ourselves a highly educated state? One with a thriving economy? A state of opportunity for all? These are the types of questions that should form the basis of both short- and long-term budgetary decisions.

The values underpinning a budget should emanate from the state’s citizenry. In an effort to gather this information from Minnesotans, the Citizens League and TakeAction Minnesota, in partnership with the Bush Foundation, hosted community conversations around the state and online to share information about our budgetary challenges and to ask Minnesotans:

### **What values and priorities should guide solutions to state budget challenges for the long-term?**

This report provides a summary of the community conversations held for the Common Cents project. A summary of each workshop and online survey and discussion results can be found at [www.citizing.org](http://www.citizing.org).

## **Overview of the Process**

The Citizens League assembled a steering team of professionals closely connected with public policy in Minnesota. These individuals represented organizations from a variety of perspectives and ideologies, and included:

- Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
- Take Action Minnesota
- Minnesota Taxpayers Association
- Minnesota Business Partnership
- Minnesota Budget Project
- Center of the American Experiment
- Minnesota Legal Services Advocacy Project
- Association of Minnesota Counties
- Growth & Justice
- Dakota County
- League of Minnesota Cities

This steering team helped develop the information and questions presented to the public, ensure that the presentation was non-partisan and publicize the project within their networks.

Once a draft presentation was complete, two “test runs” were held to test the presentation content and format. The first, held on October 12<sup>th</sup>, had about fourteen participants and the second on October 28<sup>th</sup> had another ten participants. These tests provided essential feedback that improved the presentation going forward.

Participants’ views were collected in two primary forums: community or worksite workshops and online. The Citizens League and TakeAction held 38 workshops, as follows: (*TakeAction Minnesota workshops are indicated with an “\*.”*)

- Columbia Heights – November 4
- Rosemount, Edina – November 8
- St. Paul (Highland) – November 9
- Minneapolis (Northeast) – November 11
- Evelyth, Stillwater – November 15
- Maple Plain/Long Lake, Duluth – November 16
- Rochester, St. Paul (Rondo) – November 17
- Minneapolis (Southwest), Albert Lea – November 18
- \*Minneapolis (Urban League) – November 18
- \*St. Paul – November 20 (translated in Hmong)
- \*Minneapolis – November 21 (translated in Somali)
- Anoka, St. Cloud, \*Minneapolis – November 22 (Minneapolis workshop translated in Spanish)
- Winona – November 23
- Grand Rapids, Willmar – November 29
- Alexandria, Bemidji – November 30
- Brainerd, Thief River Falls, \*Onamia – December 1
- \*Minneapolis, \*Minneapolis – December 7 (one workshop translated in Spanish)
- \*Minneapolis (Little Earth of United Tribes) – December 9
- \*Minneapolis – December 10 (translated in Spanish)
- Worthington, Mankato, \*St. Paul – January 18, 2011
- Virginia – January 19, 2011
- Detroit Lakes, Moorhead – January 20, 2011
- Worksite workshops – December 6, 15 and January 18, 2011

In addition to these workshops, a modified version of the presentation was made to over 300 participants at the Citizens League’s annual meeting on November 10<sup>th</sup>. Those results are not included in this report.

The community workshops were structured into four main sections:

- Overview
- Discussion of budget options with interactive polling

- Spending
- Taxes
- Tax base growth/economic growth
- Reform
- Group exercises
- Evaluation

Participants' views were collected at the community workshops in four ways:

- *Written responses* were gathered on questions. For some questions, participants were asked to define terms they used (i.e., “fair” taxation); other written responses involved what they meant when chose an “other” or “none of the above” option.
- *A live “survey”* was conducted throughout the workshop with the use of individual response devices. Participants were asked to sit in small groups with people they did not know, and discussed their thoughts on a series of questions. At the end of the discussion period, people “voted” by means of a handheld keypad (individual response devices). The results were then projected instantaneously on a screen. For the majority of workshops, six questions regarding budget values and priorities were handled in this manner. (The two onsite work presentations were shortened to one hour each; participants in those workshops answered four questions via the live polling.)
- *A group exercise* at each table. The exercise was broken down into two distinct steps. The first was to have participants determine the priorities for the state in the next 10-15 years. A list of terms used to describe Minnesota was provided (i.e., high quality of life, protected natural resources, well-educated population, etc.) and tables were reach consensus in assigning a ranking to each descriptive. The second step was to determine which set of strategies (increase taxes, reform, decrease spending) should be implemented in various program areas to attain the vision outlined in the priority ranking; again, each table was asked to reach consensus in determining the strategies. Tables were asked to identify up to seven budget balancing strategies using given twenty poker chips—the more chips a strategy was allocated, the greater the priority on the strategy.
- *Comments* were recorded throughout the workshops to capture discussion and insights, and were also collected via the evaluation at the end of the workshop.

## **CitiZing**

In addition to the community workshops, citizens were encouraged to engage online through the Citizen League’s online civic platform, [www.citizing.org](http://www.citizing.org). Online participants shared their views through:

- *Introductions* in which people shared “one thing they wished to tell public officials as they get to work on the state budget.”
- *Weekly surveys* started by moderators on topics of interest.
- *Discussion* topics started by moderators and participants on topics of interest.
- *A “kitchen table” forum* where people could start their own discussion topics.

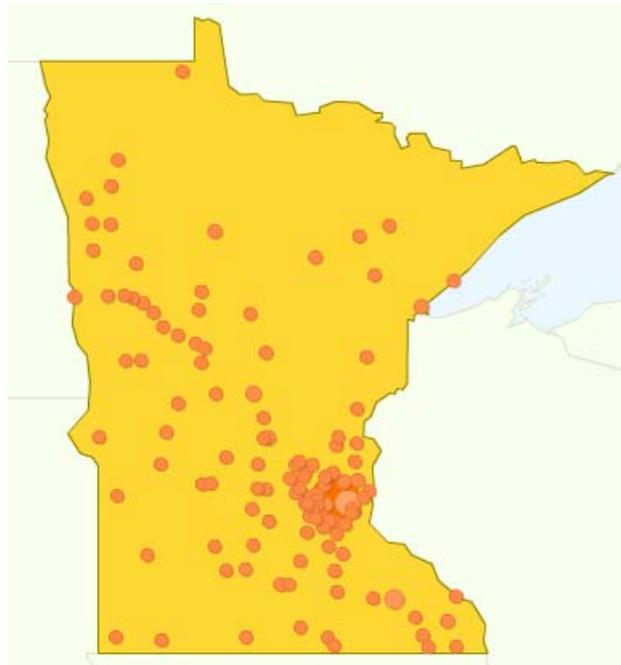
In addition, a “FAQ/You Asked It” section allowed Common Cents project staff to provide answers to questions asked in the community workshops. A “Learn” page provided resources on a wide variety of topics relating to the state budget.

### **Who Participated?**

Approximately 605 people attended the community workshops (see questions 8 through 13 in the Appendix). An additional 136 people participated online, by registering on the site. Over 200 online surveys were taken and 182 comments were submitted. (Some of the online participants also attended the community workshops, so the total is not an unduplicated count.) It should be noted that the project website has a much broader reach than the number who signed in—it has had almost 3,000 visits by 1,081 unique visitors.

People from over 113 Minnesota cities participated online. The map below shows the location of those who participated online. From November 1<sup>st</sup> – January 1<sup>st</sup> there were:

- 2,079 visits by 1,081 unique visitors
- 5.63 average number of page views per visit
- 5 minutes, 36 seconds – average time spent on site
- 11,701 total page views
- Visitors from 113 Minnesota cities



The following table provides a demographic breakdown of community workshop participants. Participation was fairly-well represented across most demographic categories, except race and ethnicity. Also, those of liberal political ideology were over-represented. The demographics of the community workshops were as follows:

<b>What is your gender?</b>		
Male		47%
Female		53%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>How old are you?</b>		
Under 18		3%
19-35		22%
36-50		29%
51-65		32%
65+		14%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>What ethnicity best represents you?</b>		
American Indian or Alaskan Native		5%
Asian		7%
Black or African American		12%
Hispanic or Latino		5%
Multiracial		3%
White or Caucasian (non-Hispanic)		66%
Other		2%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>What political ideology best represents you?</b>		
Conservative		18%
Liberal		33%
Libertarian		3%
Socialist		7%
Moderate		17%
Mix		14%
Other		9%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Do you have any children under 18 living at home?</b>		
Yes		36%
No		64%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Which of these income statements best represents you?</b>		
It's hard to make ends meet monthly		35%
I'm reasonably comfortable with my income – for now.		45%
I'm financially comfortable and have few worries about the future.		20%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Key Themes and Findings

Across the workshops and online activities, a number of common themes emerged. These are described below (in no particular order) and illustrated with results from the voting/online survey, budget game and written comments. It would be inaccurate to conclude that there is unanimity around these themes; indeed many viewpoints were represented. The appropriate interpretation is that these themes were voiced repeatedly throughout the workshops and online.

A note on the data: most questions allowed participants to select more than one answer. Therefore, the total number of answers is larger than the total number of participants. The findings below cite the percentage of participants who selected given answer choices and/or the answer choice as a percentage of the total votes cast. The full data and both sets of percentages can be found in the Appendix.

### The top five themes are:

1. There was a consistent emphasis on reforming services, especially K-12 education; health and income support for the poor, disabled and elderly; long-term care for the elderly; and higher education.
2. Participants see Minnesota as a high quality, well-educated state, generally willing to continue to spend to maintain that, but want to focus on reform and a more competent, innovative government to accomplish that reform in partnership with others.
3. Participants believe the tax structure needs reforming, to become more fair and transparent.
4. Participants are willing to make across the board spending cuts in the short-term, but don't favor spending cuts (alone) as a long-term strategy.
5. Participants want better information about the state budget and favor an inclusive approach.

## Key Findings

**#1 – When presented with straightforward and unbiased information, Minnesotans immediately grasp the state's fiscal situation. They often ask insightful, nuanced questions. They enjoyed the conversation and found both the presentation and the table discussions with other Minnesotans helpful in thinking through the issues.**

- People bring different viewpoints to the process, but agree on what's important to the state.
- Tables comprised of people from opposite ends of the political spectrum were able to come to agree on priorities and strategies. While there was disagreement and it was at times difficult, tables were generally able to find consensus.
- Participants were able to take a topic filled with potential conflict and discuss it with their neighbors in a civil, meaningful way.
- People provided consistent answers across the spending and tax questions. For example, of the 65 participants who chose only the answer "none of the above" when presented with potential spending cuts, 61 (94%) indicated a willingness to pay higher taxes. Of the 64 people who selected only "I am not willing; I am taxed enough," 60 (94%) identified spending cuts.
- Participants enjoyed participating in the discussion (average rating 3.63 out of 4, where 4 equals a great deal) and found the table discussions with their neighbors helpful (average rating = 3.13).

Some comments that reflect this finding:

- "Great presentation, fun, nice tablemates, interesting discussion." – Edina participant
- "Terrific session. Please do more. The opportunity to vote was great. I think it would be more interesting to people if they knew it wasn't just a policy talk!" – Worksite participant
- Forums like this would be great to bring forth ideas and perhaps facilitate change or acceptance of change. – St. Paul (Rondo) participant
- "People with different ideas, perspectives, and ideologies can have a rational and productive discussion." – Minneapolis (Northeast) participant
- "This table was very diverse. We had a fabulous discussion. Started a bit adversarial—but ended jovial. I think people make assumptions about others and close off, but then open up later." – Rochester participant

**#2 – Participants expressed a consistent set of priorities for Minnesota's future, in rank order (5 = a strong priority area for improvement; 4 = somewhat of a priority for improvement; 3 = current conditions are about right):**

- Strong economy: average rating = 4.50. The economy was participants' top priority for the future; however, people were mixed on the means for achieving it and/or the government's role or effectiveness.
- Well-educated people: average rating = 4.16. The importance of education was threaded throughout the discussion—a reason that people are attracted to living here, as the foundation for a strong economy, and as the major priority for reform
- Competent and innovative government: average rating = 4.16. This finding is notable in that it ranked very high by conservatives and liberals alike. The discussions suggested that this priority is consistent with participants' strong emphasis on reform, and they see a competent and innovative government as a

precondition for reform. In fact, only 5% of participants suggested that Minnesotans need to lower their expectations about services.

- This finding may suggest that Minnesotans believe that the success of government is intertwined with the success of the state by ranking these three as their top priorities: strong economy and well-educated population can't be achieved without a competent and innovative government.

### **#3 – Participants expect elected officials to take a longer-term view when approaching the budget, although they realize how difficult the immediate decisions are.**

- 28% (the largest single answer) cited “short-term political decisions” as the primary culprit for our budget problems
- Only 3% opted *not* to include immediate measures for growing the economy over the longer-term
- Many participants’ comments indicated their appreciation for how difficult the decisions are.

Some comments that support this finding:

- “Keep it focused on the best outcome for Minnesotan in the long-term rather than just next campaign.” – Anoka participant
- “Think long term. Don’t be ‘penny-wise and pound foolish.’ ” – Virginia participant
- “Concern for long-term prosperity and economic justice in Minnesota.” – Columbia Heights participant
- “I’ve listened to the budget issues in Minnesota for the last 8 years and it doesn’t seem to be making any real progress. I would like to see more than a band aid approach to the problem.” – Edina participant
- “I feel the budget problem is huge for Minnesota, and the solution needs to be a thoughtful, long-term one.” – Edina participant
- “Fixing the state budget problem is hard.” – Minneapolis (Northeast) participant
- “Question #4 made me laugh a little because participating in tonight’s event really confirmed for me how hard it is to gain consensus and make tough decisions. I sympathize with our elected officials.” – Grand Rapids participant

### **#4 – Reform was a strong theme.**

- Many participants would introduce reform at the start of the workshops, when beginning the discussion. For example, in the presentation reform is the last option discussed. Participants would ask, at the outset, which option they should vote for if they want reform.
- 99% of participants’ answers indicated we should overcome barriers to reform (as opposed to supporting conventional reasons to oppose reform).

Some comments that support this finding:

- “That still a number of people seem to speak from what would be politically feasible than from what we really want.” – Minneapolis (Southwest) participant
- “Strong and viable local units are needed to make governmental reforms. Most counties in Minnesota and in the country are too small to carry out the tasks that need to be performed at the local level. Many state and federal programs need to be managed at the local level to gain control over wasteful spending. Governmental structures have not been modernized since the horse buggy era. Large amounts of tax funds are wasted as reforms have not been made.” – Mankato participant
- “Break the mold! We need experiments; people are not vigorously working at this, as we do in the private sector.” – Worksite participant
- “In regard to reform: Governor and Legislature need to get more done together, not apart!” – Edina participant
- ”Reform is key!” – Grand Rapids participant
- “People here want to seriously work on reform.” – Minneapolis (Northeast) participant
- “I favor exploring serious reform throughout government. More bipartisan solutions needed. Think like an American, not a party member.” – Worksite participant
- “We need to reform how we discuss reform; it needs to get down to the local level. It has never happened but we keep doing the same thing and expecting different results.” – Grand Rapids participant
- “Reform is needed in all areas of state department budgets, especially in Health and Human Services.” – Mankato participant

#### **#5 – Participants favor tax reform.**

- 17% of participants chose “I am not willing; I am taxed enough” as their first choice answer regarding willingness to pay more taxes; 11% selected this answer only.
- When identifying under what circumstances, if any, they would personally be willing to pay higher taxes, the most popular answer was “if the overall tax structure is fair,” selected by 44% of participants.
- Most participants who defined “fair” said it meant more transparent and less regressive.

Some comments that support this finding:

- “A tax system that is open and understandable; folks don’t know if they’re being taxed fairly.” – Workshop participant
- “A more honest taxing system: perhaps we should tax consumption, looking not just what we tax, but how we tax.” – Rochester participant
- “Fair taxes to me mean a progressive system.” – Minneapolis (Southwest) participant

- “Fair = similar effective rate across all deciles.” – Minneapolis (Southwest) participant
- “Tax structure is not fair and needs to be restructured.” – Grand Rapids participant
- “Fair tax based on the ability to pay.” – St. Paul (Rondo) participant
- Government reform and tax reform [are] urgently needed, but no increase in overall tax burden.” – Maple Plain participant
- “Fair Tax Structure = People who make the most money should pay the most.” – Worksite participant

**#6 – Participants suggested a mixed approach to budget balancing; of the *table (i.e., group consensus)* results:**

- 96% of the tables included at least one area of reform.
- 77% included some higher taxes.
- 69% included some spending cuts.
- 47% of the tables included a mix of spending cuts *and* higher taxes *and* reform.

**#7 – Reform was the most popular budget strategy. The weighted mix of budget-balancing strategies was:**

- 52% for reform
- 30% for higher taxes
- 18% for spending cuts

**#8 – The priority on reform wasn’t simply to avoid difficult tax or spending decisions—discussions reflected a clear sense of service delivery or spending patterns gone astray, and that Minnesota must improve. In addition, many tables that indicated reform also paired reform in a spending category with higher taxes or spending cuts. For example, the most popular target for reform was K-12 education and health and income support for the poor.**

- 63% of tables expressed support for major K-12 reform
- 25% supported major K-12 reform *and* higher taxes; and
- 17% supported major K-12 reform *and* spending cuts.

Some comments that support this finding:

- “We are willing to fund more on education, but demand more bang for the dollar.” – Edina participant
- “You need to look into wasteful spending in education, high pension plans need to be cut—term limits—limit earmarks.” – Alexandria participant
- “Reform before additional spending. Cut, reform, raise taxes.” – Grand Rapids participant

**#9 – The top budget strategies were:**

- 1 (tied): Major reform of K-12 education
- 1 (tied): Major reform of health and income support for the poor
- 2: Increase taxes for K-12 education
- 3: Major reform for LTC for the elderly
- 4 (tied): Increase taxes for higher education
- 4 (tied): Increase taxes for health and income support for the poor
- 4 (tied): Major reform of higher education
- 5: Across-the-board reform

**Budget Balancing Priorities**

Percent of total consensus votes cast

Program Area	Spending Cuts	Strategy	
		Major Reform	Higher Taxes
K-12	1%	12%	8%
Higher Education	2%	6%	6%
LTC for the Elderly	2%	7%	3%
Health & Income Support for Children, Poor & Disabled	2%	12%	6%
Property Tax Aids & Credits	3%	3%	1%
Public Safety	3%	4%	2%
Other	2%	3%	2%
Across the Board	4%	5%	4%
<b>% of total votes cast</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>30%</b>
% of tables that had at least one vote for strategy	69%	96%	77%

\*votes were cast by placing chips in the corresponding box, with tables reaching consensus

**#10 – Of all the questions, there was the least consensus on which spending cuts to make. The most cited area for spending cuts was property tax aids—even though participants realized it would increase their property taxes. They favor greater transparency in how taxes are raised and spent.**

- One in three participants selected property tax aids as a candidate for spending cuts as one of their top three choices; it was also the most popular first choice answer.
- 12% of participants selected “no spending cuts” as their top answer.
- Health care for the poor was the least popular answer, garnering only 6% of the total votes cast, and selected by 12% of participants as a top three choice.

Some comments that support this finding:

- “All money is generated locally, and people have more confidence in local government decisions, bring the money back, we would be better off, we could see it, we could call council members.” – Worksite participant
- “Keep taxes and services local.” – Maple Plain participant

**#11 – Voting on spending and taxes took place across what might be considered standard ideological lines. The income of participants seemed to have minimal effect.**

- 47% of conservatives, 13% of moderates and 7% of liberals said they were not willing to pay higher taxes as their first choice on the tax question.
- 4% of conservatives, 14% of moderates and 20% of liberals opposed spending cuts as their first answer choice.
- Spending cuts and new taxes were opposed (as a first answer choice) across the income spectrum in nearly the same proportions, ranging from 20% to 25% against taxes and 15% to 20% against spending cuts, from lowest to highest incomes, respectively.

**#12 – For the most part, participants are not blaming public officials for budget problems and take an inclusive approach to solving the problems.**

- To overcome barriers to reform, participants favored including citizens in developing reform proposals; improving Minnesotans’ understanding that services can’t stay the way they are and remain affordable; and bipartisan or nonpartisan approaches so that people have more confidence in the approach.
- To make good budget decisions, participants favored better public information, a willingness of all Minnesotans to shoulder some burden, and public officials who are better leaders of difficult change.
- The second least popular answer (of seven choices) to why Minnesota has recurring budget shortfalls was “government is inefficient” at 11% of total answers.

Some comments that support this finding:

- “People seem to forget that people who work for the government also pay taxes.” – Edina participant
- “Thank you for serving.” – Rochester participant
- “I truly believe they need to make concerted effort to involve their constituents, educate and truly give those constituents a voice.” – Grand Rapids participant
- “Work together. Make the tough choices. Get public input.” – Brainerd participant
- “Listen to the people of Minnesota, they are willing to sacrifice.” – Minneapolis (Southwest) participant

- “Bi-partisan dialogue/action is the basis of good government/decisions!” – Virginia participant
- “Have community meetings such as this to get the insight from taxpayers and their constituents.” – St. Paul participant
- “I think we all need to be involved. We shouldn’t rely solely on our elected officials.” – Winona participant
- “Public leaders should involve citizens in developing reform proposals. It takes every individual to make Minnesota a great and prosperous state.” – St. Paul participant

**#13 – Participants indicated that they appreciated the opportunity to learn and weigh in, and to engage in discussions with others who may have different views. On a scale of 1 (not at all), 2 (a little), 3 (some), and 4 (a great deal):**

- Participants enjoyed the meeting, rating it a 3.63
- Based on the discussion, participants think budget decisions would improve if policy makers listen to citizens, rating it a 3.26
- Participants learned quite a bit, rating it a 3.24
- Participants found the table conversations helpful, rating it a 3.13

**Appendix: Polling Results: Citizens League & TakeAction MN Workshops**

\*Indicates a question included in the (abbreviated) worksite presentations. For these questions the number of responses ("n") will be greater than others (n=605).

#1 - For you personally, what makes Minnesota an attractive place to live today? (choose two)	Citizens League	TakeAction	Total Answers	% of Total Answers	% of Total Participants
					Choosing This Answer
				(n=795)	(n=508)
Quality of life in communities	25%	12%	153	19%	30%
My family and friends	19%	18%	147	18%	29%
A highly educated population	16%	14%	121	15%	24%
Natural resources	14%	10%	100	13%	20%
Ethic of concern for one another	9%	14%	89	11%	18%
Good jobs	8%	11%	72	9%	14%
Racial and cultural diversity	2%	13%	53	7%	10%
Four seasons	6%	5%	41	5%	8%
Sports/cultural attractions	2%	3%	19	2%	4%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>795</b>	<b>100%</b>	

*#2 - The state has a history of recurring budget shortfalls. Why do you think that is? (choose two)	Citizens League	TakeAction	Total Answers	% of Total Answers	% of Total Participants
					Choosing This Answer
				(n=974)	(n=605)
Short-term political decisions ignore long-term fiscal problems	32%	22%	277	28%	46%
Tax & spending structure doesn't match today's economy	16%	15%	149	15%	25%
People want more than they're willing to pay for	17%	7%	132	14%	22%
Special interests are too influential	10%	14%	112	11%	19%
Government is inefficient	8%	17%	107	11%	18%
The economy	8%	15%	100	10%	17%
We haven't raised adequate taxes	10%	11%	97	10%	16%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>974</b>	<b>100%</b>	

*#3 - Over the next ten years, where would you spend LESS state money? (choose up to three)	Citizens League	TakeAction	Total Answers	% of Total Answers	% of Total Participants
					Choosing This Answer
				(n=1,202)	(n=605)
Property tax aids	17%	15%	198	16%	33%
Other	10%	24%	177	15%	29%
None of the above	10%	20%	160	13%	26%
Income assistance	12%	7%	127	11%	21%
Public safety	8%	15%	127	11%	21%
Long-term care for the elderly	12%	7%	123	10%	20%
Higher education	12%	5%	121	10%	20%
K-12 education	10%	3%	95	8%	16%
Health care for the poor	7%	4%	74	6%	12%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,202</b>	<b>100%</b>	

*#4 - Under what circumstances, if any, would you personally be willing to pay higher taxes? (choose up to two)	Citizens League	TakeAction	Total Answers	% of Total Answers	% of Total Participants
					Choosing This Answer
				(n=914)	(n=605)
If the overall tax structure is fair	29%	30%	269	29%	44%
If it's clear we get more for our money	17%	18%	159	17%	26%
I am not willing; I am taxed enough	15%	19%	146	16%	24%
I'm willing to pay more given the budget situation	16%	6%	117	13%	19%
For certain types of taxes only	10%	12%	100	11%	17%
For certain services only	8%	6%	66	7%	11%
Other	5%	8%	57	6%	9%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>914</b>	<b>100%</b>	

#5 - In the near term, I would find room in the state budget for these priorities to achieve more economic growth: (choose two)	Citizens League	TakeAction	Total Answers	% of Total Answers	% of Total Participants
					Choosing This Answer
				(n=836)	(n=508)
Raise the overall level of K-12 educational achievement	17%	20%	150	18%	30%
Invest in research and development to increase productivity	19%	11%	130	16%	26%
Reform the tax structure to encourage investment/Reduce business taxes	17%	13%	128	15%	25%
Invest in infrastructure to increase productivity	18%	12%	127	15%	25%
Job training to increase productivity.	10%	19%	115	14%	23%
Increase % of population with higher education	13%	13%	109	13%	21%
Attract new workers, including immigrants	4%	9%	48	6%	9%
None of the above	4%	3%	29	3%	6%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>100%</b>	

*#6 - How do we best overcome the barriers to reform? (choose up to two)	Citizens League	TakeAction	Total Answers	% of Total Answers	% of Total Participants
					Choosing This Answer
				(n=847)	(n=539) <sup>1</sup>
Our public leaders should involve citizens more	24%	37%	245	29%	45%
Minnesotans need to better understand that public services can't stay the way they are and still be affordable.	27%	20%	208	25%	39%
We need a bi-partisan or nonpartisan approach so that people have more confidence in the proposal.	26%	19%	195	23%	36%
Our public leaders need to make the tough choices	15%	11%	117	14%	22%
Other	7%	11%	71	8%	13%
We shouldn't; the concerns are legitimate.	1%	2%	11	1%	2%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>847</b>	<b>100%</b>	

#7 - What do you think is most important for good budgetary decision-making as Minnesota moves forward? (choose two)	Citizens League	TakeAction	Total Answers	% of Total Answers	% of Total Participants
					Choosing This Answer
				(n=579)	(n=508)
Better public information about spending and outcomes	30%	37%	188	32%	37%
We Minnesotans all need to be willing to shoulder some burden	22%	19%	123	21%	24%
Public officials who are better leaders of difficult change	22%	18%	121	21%	24%
Community conversations like this	17%	13%	91	16%	18%
Lower public expectations about services	7%	2%	30	5%	6%
Other	2%	10%	26	4%	5%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>100%</b>	

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

	Citizens League	TakeAction	Total Answers	% of Total Answers	% of Total Participants Choosing This Answer
					(n=526)
<b>*#8 – What is your gender?</b>					
Female	51%	58%	281	53%	46%
Male	49%	42%	245	47%	40%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>100%</b>	

	Citizens League	TakeAction	Total Answers	% of Total Answers	% of Total Participants Choosing This Answer
					(n=520)
<b>*#9 – How old are you?</b>					
51 – 65	38%	22%	168	32%	28%
36 – 50	27%	34%	151	29%	25%
19 – 35	19%	28%	115	22%	19%
65+	16%	9%	71	14%	14%
Under 18	1%	7%	15	3%	2%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>100%</b>	

	Citizens League	TakeAction	Total Answers	% of Total Answers	% of Total Participants Choosing This Answer
					(n=525)
<b>*#10 - What ethnicity best represents you?</b>					
White or Caucasian (non-Hispanic)	94%	14%	348	66%	58%
Black or African American	2%	30%	61	12%	10%
Asian	1%	19%	37	7%	6%
Hispanic or Latino	1%	14%	27	5%	4%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0%	13%	25	5%	4%
Multiracial	1%	7%	15	3%	2%
Other	2%	3%	12	2%	2%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>100%</b>	

	Citizens League	TakeAction	Total Answers	% of Total Answers	% of Total Participants Choosing This Answer
					(n=526)
<b>*#11 - What political ideology best represents you?</b>					
Liberal	31%	35%	172	33%	28%
Conservative	23%	8%	93	18%	15%
Moderate	19%	11%	87	17%	17%
Mix	10%	21%	72	14%	12%
Other	9%	10%	49	9%	5%
Socialist	4%	13%	38	7%	6%
Libertarian	3%	2%	15	3%	2%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>100%</b>	

	Citizens League	TakeAction	Total Answers	% of Total Answers	% of Total Participants Choosing This Answer
					(n=516)
<b>*#12 - Do you have any children under 18 living at home?</b>					
No	73%	47%	331	64%	55%
Yes	27%	53%	185	36%	30%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>100%</b>	

	Citizens League	TakeAction	Total Answers	% of Total Answers	% of Total Participants Choosing This Answer
					(n=532)
<b>*#13 - Which of these statements about income best represents you?</b>					
I'm reasonably comfortable with my income—for now.	56%	26%	240	45%	40%
It's hard to make ends meet each month.	19%	63%	185	35%	30%
I'm financially comfortable and have few worries about the future.	25%	11%	107	20%	18%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>100%</b>	

<sup>1</sup> This question was included in the worksite presentations, but it was not included in the first five workshops. As such, the "n" is different than the others.

## Appendix: Participating Organizations



*Common ground. Common good.*

**The Citizens League** is a nonprofit organization that builds civic imagination and capacity in Minnesota. They do this by identifying, framing and proposing solutions to public policy problems; developing civic leaders in all generations who govern for the common good; and organizing the individual and institutional relationships necessary to achieve their goals. [www.citizensleague.org](http://www.citizensleague.org)



**TakeAction Minnesota** is a nonprofit organization that moves Minnesotans to active grassroots democracy that builds social, racial and economic justice. They do this by expanding the grassroots organizing capacity of its member organizations; developing new leaders who represent and mobilize their communities; leading efforts to win bold issue campaigns; shaping public debate; and building mutually accountable partnerships with elected officials. [www.takeactionminnesota.org](http://www.takeactionminnesota.org)

## BUSH FOUNDATION

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**The Bush Foundation** is a private foundation that works to improve the quality of life in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and in the 23 sovereign tribal nations that share the same geography by strengthening organizational, community, and individual leadership. Through its work, the Bush Foundation is a catalyst for the courageous leadership necessary to create sustainable solutions to tough public problems and ensure community vitality. [www.bushfoundation.org](http://www.bushfoundation.org)